

Learning Mathematics: Like Proposing to a Girl

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ABSTRACT

This poem likens learning mathematics to a boy who proposes love to a girl. In the African culture, there are certain qualities of a girl that are considered when she is ripe for being proposed to: outside physical appearance, hardworking capability and beauty as well as inner qualities such as intelligence, good morals, faithfulness, loving and feeling for others. However, there are challenges and obstacles encountered when the boy proposes love. In this poem, the 'learner' of mathematics is the 'boy' whereas the 'girl' is mathematics itself. Suggestions for dealing with the challenges and obstacles are hereby given. This poem can be dramatized or acted by teachers and their learners in the mathematics classroom situation, or can be used as a motivational teaching strategy by mathematics teachers or college lecturers.

Keywords: learning mathematics, proposing love, humor, symbolism, learning obstacles, coping with challenges, motivational teaching strategies

Contribution of this paper to the literature

- Since mathematics, by its very nature, is deemed to be a difficult subject by the majority of people, the author has designed a poem that can be recited, dramatized or acted (with some suitable adaptations) by learners or teachers of mathematics in order to remove or reduce fear, anxiety and negative attitude of the subject. The poem is in humorous 'art form' which likens or symbolizes mathematics to a 'difficult' or 'attitudinal' girl who does not easily fall in love with a boy (the proposer or the learner of mathematics). Like in most African cultures, the girl who is being proposed to does not easily give in; so it takes determination, perseverance, witty, humor, etc., for the boy to win her heart.
- The paper contributes to strategies of learning and teaching mathematics in motivational and humorous ways. It also contributes to ways of reducing anxiety and fear of mathematics and building positive attitudes and beliefs. It can be recited as it is just for fun or may be used by mathematics teachers who normally find it difficult to convince their students to like mathematics. The paper contributes to knowledge by giving suggestions of steps to follow if a learner initially finds learning mathematics difficult. Mathematics learners and their teachers can also transform the poem into a video which can be presented or shown at the schools' mathematics math clubs.

THE POEM

*Learning Mathematics is like proposing love to a girl
When you first meet her
You look at her face and her physical appearance
You also try to investigate her 'inner' qualities
You see that she is truly a beautiful and admirable girl
You then decide to like her
But you are not courageous enough to tell her
So you start by asking her some silly questions
She either replies in one-word answers or keeps 'mum'*

*Learning Mathematics is like proposing love to a girl
When you first meet the girl Mathematics
Look at her broad outside appearance
Study her life history
Learn why and how she developed
You will be motivated to like her*

*When the girl you like best keeps 'mum'
You try to please her in various ways
You may play some interesting games during her presence
Or sing some nice songs in her presence
You might engage a third party to talk to her
If you fail, don't give up
Just give it a short rest and try again later
One day she will begin to talk some sense with you
And you will begin to like each other
And that liking will develop into love
Deep love and true love
Love of such kind as
"Where you go, I will go
What you eat, I will eat
Where you sleep, I will sleep
And when you die, I will also long to die"*

*Learning Mathematics is like that
When you have looked at her appearance
And have studied her history
And have begun to like her
You should now engage her
By thinking Mathematics each day
Talking Mathematics each day
Practicing Mathematics each day*

*But if you fail, don't give up
Just give it a short rest
And do something else
Like playing some math games
Or singing some math songs
Or revisiting math content or literature
Or engaging a third party or a tutor*

*One day you will succeed
And that liking of 'her' will develop into love
You will begin to love Mathematics
And Mathematics will also love you
You will be known as a mathematician
Or a mathematics specialist
Or a mathematics educator
Or whatever name they shall label you with
But you know that you and 'her' are lovers until death
But when you die Mathematics will remain,
For others to like 'her' or love 'her'.*

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